Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Note: Instructions to DNRC staff for preparing this EA can be found at: http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/eis_ea.html

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address*: Big Sky Water and Sewer District No. 363, PO Box 160670, Big Sky, Mt. 59716

2. *Type of action*: Application To Change A Water Right # 30026963-41F

3. *Water source name*: Groundwater wells

4. *Location affected by project*: Sec 36 T6S R3E, Gallatin County

5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits*: The applicant proposes to drill two additional wells to supply the Big Sky Water & Sewer District No. 363. The permitted flow rate of 985 GPM, and permitted volume of 1,307.38 acre-feet will not be exceeded. The two new wells will be located in the NESWNE Sec 36 T6S R3E, and NENWSW Sec 36 T6S R3E, Gallatin County. The DNRC shall Authorize a Change if the applicant proves that the criteria in MCA # 85-2-402 are met.

6. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment: (include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)* Montana State Historical Preservation Office, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Montana Natural Heritage Program, Gallatin County Planning Office, Montana department of Environmental Quality,

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity *- Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.*

Determination: The source of water is groundwater which has not been identified as chronically or periodically dewatered by the DFWP.

Water quality *- Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.*

Determination: This groundwater source is not listed on the DEQ, 303(d) list.

Groundwater *- Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.*

Determination: This change application is not requesting any additional water. The groundwater supply should not be impacted.

DIVERSION WORKS *- Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

Determination: Drilling two additional wells will have no channel impacts, or impacts on riparian areas or barriers.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species *- Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

Determination: The Montana Natural Heritage Program was contacted three separate times. They never responded to my three requests. This question can not be answered.

Wetlands *- Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: There are no wetlands at the locations of these wells.

Ponds *- For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: This project does not involve a pond.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE *- Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

Determination: Drillings these wells will not degrade soil quality, alter soil stability, or moisture content. There is no saline seep near the proposed well locations.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

Determination: Existing vegetative cover will be altered when the wells are drilled and the pipeline is installed. Noxious weeds my spread if the disturbed area is not replanted.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

Determination: There will be no significant impact on air quality.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.*

Determination: The State Historic Preservation Office was contacted. Since the wells have already been drilled any cultural or historical sites that may have existed have already been destroyed.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

Determination: No additional impacts on other environmental resources were identified.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

Determination: The Gallatin County Planning Office has approved development within the permitted place of use.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

Determination: This project is located on private land, with no access to recreational or wilderness activities. No impact is expected.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

Determination: There should not be any impact on human health.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*
*Yes___ No_**X**__ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

Determination: No impacts predicted.

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

Impacts on:

(a) *Cultural uniqueness and diversity?* No significant impact

(b) *Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* No significant impact

(c) *Existing land uses?* No significant impact

(d) *Quantity and distribution of employment?* No significant impact

(e) *Distribution and density of population and housing?* No significant impact

(f) *Demands for government services?* No significant impact

(g) *Industrial and commercial activity?* No significant impact

(h) *Utilities?* No significant impact

(i) *Transportation?* No significant impact

(j) *Safety?* No significant impact

(k) *Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?* No significant impact

11. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts No secondary impacts have been identified

Cumulative Impacts No cumulative impacts have been identified

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** None planned at this time.

4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** Using the current system they could divert the permitted water from the four permitted wells. Adding two additional wells could allow them to develop the permitted

flow rate and volume. It would also allow the District greater flexibility and reliability in the operation of the public water system.

PART III. Conclusion

1. ***Preferred Alternative*** They would prefer to add three new wells to the system, and use their full permitted flow rate & volume.

2 ***Comments and Responses*** No comments have been received.

1. ***Finding:***
*Yes___ No**X**___ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

If an EIS is not required, explain <u>why</u> the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: Significant impacts have not been identified. An EIS is not required for this action.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Jan R Mack
Title: Water Resource Specialist
Date: May 10, 2007